

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Final Official Action provided. However, Applicants note that the Examiner has not indicated that the drawings have been approved by the Official Draftsperson on a Form PTO-948. The Examiner is thus requested to indicate that Applicants' drawings are acceptable in the next Official Action.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 3-16, 18, and 19 and of the allowability of claims 22-24.

Upon entry of the above amendment claims 1, 2, and 17 will have been canceled and claims 3, 6, 14, 18, and 19 will have been amended. Accordingly, claims 3-16, 18, 19, and 22-24 are currently pending and Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding objection and rejection and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by COWMAN et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,183,685). Claims 1, 2, and 17 have been canceled. Accordingly, it is believed that the rejection of claims 1, 2, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) is now moot.

The Examiner has objected to claims 3-16, 18, and 19 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 3 and 6 have been rewritten in independent form to include the subject matter of base claim 1 and intervening claim 2; claim 14 has been rewritten in independent form to include the subject matter of base claim 1; and claims 18 and 19 have been rewritten in independent form to include the subject matter of base claim 17. Accordingly, in view of the above noted amendments and remarks, it is believed that the objection to claims 3-16, 18, and 19 has been overcome, and Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objection to claims 3-16, 18, and 19.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejection, and an early indication of the allowance of claims 3-16, 18, 19, and 22-24.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the proposed amendment is proper for entry since it merely rewrites objected to claims into independent form, and it is also submitted that none of the references of record, either taken alone or in any proper combination thereof, anticipates or renders obvious Applicants' invention, as recited in each of claims 3-16, 18, 19, and 22-24.

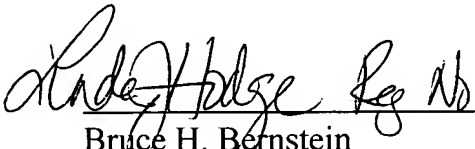
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Accordingly, consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Final Official Action, and allowance of the present amendment and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below listed number.

Respectfully submitted,
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